

THE THIRD BRANCH OF THE SALVATORIAN FAMILY Some historical facts from 1975 to 2007

Introduction

Some people say that history has not passed all facts down to us either because it has been told starting from the wars or because it has been told by a few, that is, the illustrious, the analysts or the dominant ones and not by all the people who have made this history with their own lives.

My history about the third branch of the Salvatorian Family, which begins immediately after the Twelfth General Chapter of 1975, is also a partial history since it is based on texts of the *Society* such as chapters and general synods, reports of the canonical visitations by the general superiors, official chronicles of some international meetings and official information from the administrative units. It lacks the history told by the *Congregation* and by the members of the *International Community of the Divine Savior* whom I thank for having already written, through the testimony of their lives, a beautiful history. I encourage them to write their story down, since it will serve thousands of followers of Jordan in the future.

This is the story of the *first* who became the *last* because Jordan first started to realize his dreams through the laity: in May, 1881,¹ there already were groups of laity and the first foundation officially approved by the Vicariate of Rome was that of the children.² I am sure that in the future the laity will be the majority of the followers of Jordan as they were at the beginning of our Salvatorian history.³

Jordan used four names for his organization. First, it was called *Apostolic Society* in 1878,⁴ then *Apostolic Teaching Society* in 1881,⁵ afterwards *Catholic Teaching Society* in 1883,⁶ and finally *Society of the Divine Savior* in 1893. The laity have also had four names: *Lay Associates*, *Association of the Divine Savior*, *Lay Salvatorians* and *International Community of the Divine Savior*. Each of these names signals a stage in a process of continuous growth and clarification of identity.⁷

1975

The entity called “Lay Associates” was brought to Rome by the Salvatorians of the United States, officially presented at the General Chapter in 1975, and miraculously saved, because it was accepted to promulgate the program, promoted by the United States Province,⁸ in the

¹Cf II *Monitore Romano* 1881, N. 9, p.71, where it is said that the third branch was introduced in “Thirteen dioceses of different nations”

² The Angel Sodality was founded in Rome on December 8, 1884, and was given approval by the Cardinal Vicar on August 16, 1886 [DSS II, p. 300]

³ Cf. Skwor’s article “*The role of the laity in Father Jordan’s plan*”

⁴ DSS II *Documenta et Studia Salvatoriana* [1878] pp. 11-22

⁵ *Idem*[1881] pp. 23-172

⁶ *Idem*[1883] pp. 175-410

⁷ As recorded in a survey carried out by the Generalate of the Society prior to the XII General Chapter on evangelization, in some provinces it was thought that Salvatorian charism was in no way different from the charism of other Congregations. In the replies one can also note that there is confusion between the specific objective and the ways and means to reach them. Cf.. General Archive. Documents of the XII General Chapter.

⁸ *Annales* Vol. X, N.1, 1975 pp. 29 -33 English Edition

Official Acts of the Twelfth General Chapter, even if it was only in the Appendix. This brief reference of the Chapter could also be seen as a prophetic allusion to the Salvatorian Family of the future: “That each community cooperate with the local churches and with Bishops’ Conferences and promote greater collaboration between clergy, religious, Salvatorian Sisters and laity.” (N. 5)⁹

The XII General Chapter approved Ordinance N. 6 which states, among other things, the following: “Whereas there are differences of opinion among the members of the Society concerning the early beginnings, the General Chapter resolves that its primary mandate to the Historical Commission be: to gather and publish the documents still missing; to clarify by dialogue the different interpretations of certain historical events in our Society.”¹⁰

The Chapter also approved this Statement: “ The Chapter recognizes the intention of Father Jordan to involve lay people in close collaboration with the Society (GD 102.3 and 102.4). Salvatorian Lay Associates of the North American Province are one unique response to the Founder’s intention, which has given rise to many questions. It is the view of the majority of this Chapter that these questions have been clarified to their satisfaction. The Chapter commends this experiment of the North American Province and asks the province to report on the progress of the program to the next meeting of the General Synod (Cfr. Chapter Report of the North American Province, Appendix)¹¹

The following were the factors which helped to push the movement of Lay Associates to the international level: the investigative work of the Historical Commission, the decisions of the General Chapter, the new text of the Constitutions and the rediscovery of the place of the laity inside the Church and the Society of the Divine Savior.

In order to implement Ordinance N. 6, the Generalate appointed, on September 29, 1979, a study group composed of Fathers Antoni Kielbasa, Arno Boesing, Jerome Schommer and Peter van Meijl, who gathered a year later and produced a first text on some aspects of the Salvatorian Charism. In their conclusions, they expressed the desire to continue to study the topic in depth and asked to expand the reflection group to include some Salvatorian Sisters since “that could be beneficial for the whole of the Salvatorian Family.”¹² This group and the successive study groups on charism have been very helpful to the Society just as the International Joint Commission on Charism (IJCC) has been - and currently is - helpful for the whole of the Salvatorian Family.

From 1977 to 1979

⁹ Annales Vol. X, N.1, 1975 p. 4 English Edition

¹⁰ On June 30th 1971, the Generalate of the Society formed the International Historical Commission” [Annales Vol. IX 1972 p. 37] which began the publication of the famous collection DSS (Salvatorian Documentation and Study) which has helped greatly in rediscovering the founding plans of Father Jordan.

¹¹ Annales Vol. X, 1975 N. 1 pag. 16

¹² Annales Vol. XII, N.3, 1982 pp. 16-25. “*Aspects of the Salvatorian Charism*”

Two General Synods and some Canonical Visitations

From August 2 until August 12, 1977, the Second General Synod of the Society was held in São Paulo (Brazil). The Acts, without going into detail, only say that the program of the Lay Associates of the United States was discussed.¹³

From April 16 until June 2, 1978, the Superior General visited the Province of the United States and took the opportunity to meet various Lay Associates.¹⁴ He recognized that “*The program of the Salvatorian Associates*” provided a new dimension in the ministry of the Province, that this program caused a great controversy among the members of the province and the Society and that it was a good initiative in accord with the intention of the Founder and in accord with the spirit and purpose of the Society. That’s why the Twelfth General Chapter “supported and commanded the basic idea of the Salvatorian Associate Program.” He recommended that the program be revised and that it be put in its appropriate perspective, underlining its character of association and keeping in mind the specific character of the “canonical” Salvatorians. By using this word in quotation marks he wanted to make clear that no “mixed” communities between religious and laity should be formed. Then he added that the Society is mature enough to welcome another element into its pluralistic structure. Finally, he said that through this program our Society would be filled with much energy, vitality, good will and holiness in order to fulfill the apostolic mission of the Church.¹⁵

The Third General Synod, in which I participated as the Provincial of Colombia, took place in Racine, USA (not far from Milwaukee), from July 17 until July 27, 1979. There, too, we talked about the program of the Associates. In the *Annales* we find two mentions of the topic, one from Poland and one from the United States. The then recently appointed provincial of the United States, Justin Pierce, confirmed in his written report that the program of the Associates was in a process of reorganization with new leadership and that the direction had been changed.¹⁶ Father Jozef Kmiec, provincial of Poland, wrote in his report that there were groups of Salvatorian collaborators not only in Poland but also in the Polish houses in the United States.¹⁷ The two provincials were talking about different things: one talked about lay associates (USA) and the other about collaborators and benefactors (Poland).

At that time, the idea of a possible third branch of the Salvatorian Family at the international level was not yet clear. The provincial of Brazil, Father Arno Boesing, spoke about the cooperation that existed in his province between the Society and the Congregation and mentioned the programs developed by IPC (Inter-Provincial Cooperation) which included the project to “translate and study together the historical documents of the SDS in order to understand our Salvatorian charism more clearly.”¹⁸ This study of the sources would soon result in the recognition that Salvatorian laity did also belong to the founding project of Jordan, as we’ll see later. During the General Synod of Racine, the provincial of Austria, Father Rupert Aschenbrenner, also mentioned the co-operation already existing in his province with Salvatorian sisters for the promotion of vocations, the exchange of information

¹³ “Then Father Myron Wagner gave an account of the program of the Associates in the province of the United States and its problems were presented”. [*Annales* p. 35 Vol. X, N. 5, 1977]

¹⁴ *Annales* Vol. XI, N.1, 1978, p. 9

¹⁵ *Annales* Vol. XI, N. 1, 1978 pp. 12-13

¹⁶ *Annales* Vol. XI, N. 3, 1980 p. 83

¹⁷ *Annales* Vol. XI, N. 3, 1980 p. 77

¹⁸ *Annales*. Vol. XI, N. 3, 1980, p. 48 In 1983 Father Divo Pedro Binotto mentioned the work carried out by the CIP in Brazil. [*Annales* Vol XII. N. 5 1983 p, 42]

and mutual help.¹⁹ Undoubtedly, this climate of mutual understanding between the Society and the Congregation helped the Austrian laity to start, on their own initiative, the third branch of the Salvatorian Family.

The first three experiences of lay associates were born in different ways: in the United States, it was an initiative by the Society; in Brazil the initiative was advanced by the Society and the Congregation; and in Austria it was the laity's own initiative. I believe this to be indeed a manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit, who does not let Himself be contained by our limitations.

From October 3 until November 9, 1979, Superior General Gerard Rogowski made his canonical visitation to Poland and made an allusion to the "work of the Salvatorian collaborators," repeating what Father Kmiec had said at the General Synod of Racine and adding that this program developed in agreement with the spirit of the Founder and in agreement with the current teachings of the Church. Then, he cited the provincial statutes of Poland (art. 54 and 55) where the aim and the activities of the Salvatorian collaborators are described, namely: to lead other people to God through the example of a true Christian life so that Christ and his teachings are accepted in their environment; to help the Society spiritually as well as materially to promote and spread Catholic writings." In the end, the statutes affirmed that the collaborators "share the prayers and the merits of the whole Society."²⁰

From 1981 to 1993

The Thirteenth General Chapter, the Historical Commission, and the Fifth General Synod

The year 1981 marked the centenary of the foundation of the Society. The Thirteenth General Chapter, celebrated in Steinfeld, Germany, was almost entirely dedicated to the study and the approval of the new text of the Constitution. I had the honor to participate in that chapter which also approved this ordinance about the relationship between the Society and Laity: "The XIII General Chapter directs that the Generalate conduct a study on the relationship between the Society and the lay people joined with us in the spirit and apostolic purpose of the Founder."²¹ This ordinance was along the same lines as Article 108 of the new Constitution: "According the original intention of our Founder, we seek to promote cooperation with individuals and groups joined with us in his spirit and apostolic purpose." When the Constitution was approved by the Holy See two years later, it was requested that the following sentence be added to article 108: "They [the Associates] collaborate in the apostolic works of the Society without the right of participation in its internal life or governmental structures".²²

It was a historic moment: the Congregation for Religious was then approving those collaborators that Jordan had thought of ("they collaborate") and was chasing away once again the ghost of the famous "Noah's Ark" which appeared in the original program of the Salvatorian Associates of the United States in which the possibility of lay sharing their lives with the members of the

¹⁹ Annales. Vol. XI, N.3, 1980 p. 41

²⁰ Annales Vol. XI, N. 3, 1980, p. 15-16

²¹ Annales Vol. XII, N. 1, 1981, p.12

²² See my conference at the Assembly of the Salvatorian Family in 1997 in Milwaukee (USA) mentioned in Annales Vol. XIV, N.8, 1998, p. 607]. It was republished in the United States in 2007.

Society was considered.²³ However, the Church was not prepared to approve “families” yet. Therefore the sisters, the fathers and brothers, and the lay would have to travel a long way until the actual Salvatorian Family appeared, not as a “Noah’s Ark” but as three autonomous and interdependent branches. This reality was already providentially foreshadowed in the General Chapter of 1981 as affirmed by Earl Skwor.²⁴

In July 1985, the Fifth General Synod of the Society met in Medellin (Colombia). Father Tom J. Novak wrote an article in *Annales* where he said that the Synod, in referring to the reports from the provinces, mentioned the “development of new lay ministries and the progress of the programs of the Salvatorian Associates.”²⁵ It should be noted that the reference is to programs in general and not only to the single program of the United States for the Associates.

In *Annales* for the period between 1981 and 1987 there is very little information on Lay Salvatorians. Only from Poland do we hear that “the Salvatorian co-workers had ten days of retreat in Krakow in 1986” and that “in the last two years more than 400 people participated in this kind of retreat.”²⁶

The Fourteenth General Chapter, which was held in Steinfeld (Germany), chose as its topic “our apostolate and community in the light of the preferential option for the poor” and the topic of the lay members was also intensely discussed.

In order to prepare for the Fourteenth General Chapter, the International Commission for the History of the Society had published, in February, 1987, a study on “Father Jordan and the Laity” divided into three parts: Father Jordan as founder of an apostolic work, the principal group as center of the foundation, and the various possibilities of participating in the foundation of Jordan.²⁷ The study of this topic produced concrete fruits in the third resolution of the General Chapter entitled “the relationship between the Society and the Lay.”

The resolution begins with this clear and strong assertion: “Collaboration with the laity is in accord with the thought, inspiration, charism and efforts of the Founder. Such collaboration is part of our Salvatorian heritage, and furthermore is most prominent in the consciousness, spirit and thrust within the Church today. There already exist initiatives of collaboration between the fathers, brothers, sisters and laity in various provinces. Such collaboration is an enrichment for our life and makes our ministries more effective. These efforts should be continued and furthered. The drafts “05” (“Father Jordan and the Laity”) and “04” (“The Association of the Divine Savior”) serve as a basis for further study and for drawing up general statutes.”

²³ Throughout the whole process of clarifying the identity of the laity inside the foundation of Father Jordan, there were doubts and fears which I regard as normal and which resulted from a lack of knowledge of our history and our own charism.

²⁴ In his article on Jordan and laity, Skwor says: “And as Providence willed it, at the general chapter of 1981, while debating the concept of how membership in the Society was to be determined, the commission on Salvatorian Life and Mission came up with the idea of a Salvatorian Family. This gave birth to a new entity within the Society. It was determined to consult with the Salvatorian Sisters to see how we could collaborate in the foundation of an Association of the Divine Savior to be made up of laity but co-sponsored by both the Society and the Congregation. “*The role of the laity in Father Jordan’s plan*,” pp. 11-12

²⁵ *Annales* Vol. XII n. 8, 1985 pp. 42-43

²⁶ *Annales* Vol. XII, N. 10, 1987 p. 24

²⁷ *Annales* Vol. XIII, N.2, 1989 pp. 15-29 “*Father Jordan and the Laity*”

The proposal of the Chapter became concrete by the establishing of an International Commission to better study and promote the relationship between the Society and Lay Salvatorians in accordance with no. 108 of the Constitutions and no. 1.6 of the General Directory.

The Chapter also proposed that the commission be composed of members from the Society, from the Congregation, and from the Lay (with or without commitment) and that it should make proposals on the relationship between the Society, the Congregation and the different forms of association (of Lay). The draft, called “Association of the Divine Savior,” proposed one form of association but there were also others. In the meantime, the provinces should continue collaborating with lay or start working with them. When carrying out this work, the cultural differences should be respected.

The Chapter outlined a proposal to work with lay on three levels or concentric circles underlying the difference existing between *general collaborators* (baptized lay who help in the apostolate), *closer collaborators* (Salvatorian collaborators who help while sharing the spirit and the apostolic aims of the Society) and Lay Salvatorians. The difference lies in the **commitment**, which allows them a fuller participation in the life of the Society.

The three forms of collaboration are the following:

1. Laity who, in virtue of their baptismal commitment, *collaborate* with us in the work of the Church
2. Laity who *collaborate more closely* with us in the spirit and apostolic purpose of our Society (collaborators).
3. Lay who *participate* more fully in the life, spirit and apostolic purpose of the Society through a **commitment** (associates).²⁸

The collaboration between the Society and the Congregation continued growing because not only did the Chapter establish the International Commission on Charism but it also asked it to collaborate closely with the Historical Commission and the Salvatorian Sisters.²⁹ As a matter of fact, the tighter the bonds between the Society and the Congregation became, the more the initiatives on Lay Salvatorians increased.

This General Chapter of 1987 elected Father Malachy McBride as Superior General of the Society. While visiting the various units of the Society, he noted the growth of the laity within the Society. I mention here some of his notes:

The nomination of a lay person as director of the Salvatorian College of Bad Wurzach is seen as “a good example of the cooperation of the Salvatorians with the laity.”³⁰

It is stimulating to see a group of lay Salvatorians associated in Scherpenheuvel (Belgium) meeting every week to reflect on the Bible in order to put it into practice in their own lives. Some of them help at the pilgrim centre of the Virgin’s shrine.³¹

²⁸ Annales Vol. XIII. N.1, 1987, pp. 37-38 *I added the italics*

²⁹ Annales Vol. XIII. N. 1, 1987 pp. 40-41

³⁰ Annales Vol. XIII N. 4 1993 p. 17

³¹ Annales Vol. XIII N. 4, 1993 p. 70

On April 13 and 14, 1992, in a meeting of the whole province in Großbrußbach (Austria), “A Salvatorian Associate couple, with their two young children, attended the province meeting.”³²

In the United States a meeting of the three branches of the Salvatorian family was held in Milwaukee in which the Superior General could not participate. At the end of his visit, he pointed out that it would also be possible to develop a program of associates with the participation of the Salvatorian Sisters, since they were already participating in meetings held in several cities. The groups from the Eastern area (Washington) are the strongest while those from California are also growing in strength. The associate program, in general, is a great treasure not only for its lay participants but also for the religious members who participate in it.³³

On visiting England the Superior General said that although in that province there was still no program of associates, interest was shown in the program since Father Bernard Finan had participated in a meeting held by the associates, the sisters and the fathers in São Paulo, Brazil. He concluded: “The early history of the Society and recent documents of the Church lead us to believe that an association of lay Salvatorians would be of benefit to the province community, as well as offering a new spiritual dimension to the lives of the associates.”³⁴

In Brazil the General met groups of lay Salvatorians in Jundiai, -“a parish which one can actually call *Salvatorian* because there are two or three groups of lay Salvatorians”- and in Videira. At the end of his visit, he wrote: “Cooperation with the Salvatorian Sisters in Brazil is, in my experience, about the best in the whole Society. This cooperation helps to produce a good understanding of our Salvatorian charism, spirit, and history. Also in cooperation with the sisters our lay Salvatorian program is going well. I have had the privilege of meeting a number of lay Salvatorians in our schools and parishes. The strength of the associate program in Brazil should be a help and inspiration to other provinces.”³⁵

Throughout these six years (from 1987 until 1993) the number of lay Salvatorians grew not only in the United States, Brazil, Austria and Belgium but also in Italy, Colombia and Germany, as we will see later on. Nonetheless, the studies, reflections and decisions of the General Chapter of 1987 reached the majority of the provinces timidly, which partly explains the slow implementation of the decisions of the Chapter and the fact that only very few religious members of the Society became engaged in forming new groups or encouraging the existing ones.

1990

First meeting of the International Association of the Divine Savior

However, the generalates of the Society and the Congregation demonstrated foresight in implementing the General Chapter resolutions, as seen in the meetings organized in favor of the “The Association of the Divine Savior” in Rome (Italy) in 1990 and in São Paulo (Brazil) in 1992.

³² Annales Vol. XIII N. 4, 1993 p. 108

³³ Annales Vol, XIII, N. 4, 1993 p. 123-140

³⁴ Annales Vol. XIII, N.4, 1993 p. 153

³⁵ Annales Vol. XIII, N.4, 1993 pp. 160 and 164 and 167

The first meeting (May 14-19) was prepared and directed by Father Luiz Spolti and Sister Helena Engelmeier on behalf of both generalates. They sent a poll to the various administrative units with questions about the relationship between the Lay and the Society and the Lay and the Congregation. At the meeting such material was shared and there was a reflection on religious and lay within the Church. I mention these points from their conclusions:

1. The lay members are an integral part of the structure of the SDS and have a central place in the Salvatorian mission.
2. In light of the theology of the Second Vatican Council on the laity, the Association of the Divine Savior is to be seen within the principles of the co-responsibility and the complementarity of the callings.
3. The participation in Salvatorian Charism can develop at different levels, with different forms of interaction between the groups and under different forms: as religious men and women, associates, collaborators, benefactors, etc. The distinction within the Salvatorian family is based on the intensity of the individual's or the group's identification with the charism rather than with the work or service they accomplish. Therefore, the framework inside of which we have restricted the vision of Father Jordan is to be widened and in the future, a structure open to new initiatives or forms to realize his ideal should be maintained.
4. Here is a list of some characteristics required of the lay who desire to join the Association: a concrete living experience of the baptismal calling, an engagement with the Church in the process of personal conversion and transformation of reality, an engagement in the Salvatorian mission and a readiness to grow in the Christian vocation through a holy life, especially through prayer.

The members of this first international meeting also made the following propositions to the two Generalates: to integrate into the Historical Commission and the Commission on Charism people belonging to the three groups of the Salvatorian Family; to use the name "*Societas Salvatoriana*" instead of "Salvatorian Family" and to hold the next encounter of the three groups two years later in 1992.³⁶

1992

Second international meeting of the Association of the Divine Savior

The second meeting of the "International Commission of the Association of Lay Salvatorians" took place in São Paulo (Brazil) November 7 to 20 with the participation of religious and lay members from Austria, the United States, Belgium, the Holy Land, Brazil, Colombia, Italy, England and the two generalates.³⁷ Twenty people participated and there were also two translators. The meeting had been well prepared indeed and it was a success. There had previously been a poll among all the administrative units of the Society and the Congregation, which was answered by different administrative units such as Brazil, Germany, Austria, Merano, Italy, the region of Rome, Taiwan, Colombia, the United States and others. The questions posed by the poll concerned the existing lay Salvatorian groups, the steps made in

³⁶ Cf. General Archives of the Society. Recorded on July 25th 1990. 4 pages. The material has not yet been classified.

³⁷ I have found all this information in the Archives of the Society. This is material which has not yet been classified. See the Report of December 30, 1992, signed by Father Luiz Spolti and by Sister Helen Engelmeier. The records are signed by Father Dennis Thiessen.

order to form more groups, the difficulties in carrying out these steps, and the cooperation between the members of the Congregation, the Society and the Association of the Divine Savior in apostolic activities.

The meeting started with people sharing their experiences in the seven countries where they worked with Salvatorian laity: the United States, Austria, Colombia, Belgium, Italy, and England. Professor Eduardo Luiz Vanderley talked about laity in the Church; the situation in Brazil, especially in urban areas; and the reasons why the laity were becoming motivated by the situation in Brazil. Then Dom Angelico Bernardino, the Auxiliary Bishop of São Paulo, spoke on the pastoral priorities according to the Latin American Assembly of the Bishops in Santo Domingo. I (Mario Agudelo) spoke on the spirituality of the Salvatorian laity in the Church. The participants had the possibility to get to know some groups of Lay Salvatorians and to participate in some of the liturgical celebrations.

At the end of the meeting the proposal was made that the two generalates should keep on accompanying and animating the program of lay associates, thereby strengthening the cooperation between the Society, the Congregation and the Salvatorian Association of Lay Members; that they should promote the creation of a national coordination of Lay Associates in each country where a program is in place for them ³⁸ and continue with the International Commission for the Salvatorian Association of the Laity. It was also proposed that the generalate of the Society should invite to the General Chapter of 1993 a lay person from the United States, one from Brazil and another one from Austria.

It was also suggested that the basic contents of the formation of the laity should be: the reality, the identity of the laity, a Christology centered on Christ as Savior, an up-to-date Salvatorian spirituality, the mission, current social matters, and an ecclesiology based on a Trinitarian model expressing the essential unity and complementarity of all vocations and charisms to evangelize the world.

These two international meetings gave birth to two further meetings in which lay Salvatorians were not only participants but also protagonists because they started to take matters into their own hands. I am talking about the meetings of the seven national coordinators of Lay Salvatorians in November 2003 in Rome and the International Assembly of Lay Salvatorians in November 2006, also held in Rome.

1993

The Fifteenth General Chapter of the Society

The Fifteenth General Chapter used for the first time the official name “Lay Salvatorians.” ³⁹ It took place in Krakow (Poland) and chose the following topic: “Salvatorian Apostolic Community Life – Today and in the future”. It was said that:

³⁸ See the proposal made by the Commission on the Salvatorian Association of Laity on November 20, 1992. It presents an international history of the association, its growth between 1990 and 1992, the expectations after the meeting in Brazil and the proposals to the two generalates which we have already explained. [General Archives of the Society, section of Lay Salvatorians].

³⁹ *Annales* Vol. XIV N.1, 1993 p. 6 “You will notice the use of a new term –Lay Salvatorians – which has come into use only recently” writes Father Alex McAllister, the secretary of this General Chapter.

“It is clear that there is much work yet to be done developing our understanding of the Lay Salvatorian vocation but it is clear that this is something that each province must urgently look at.” Ordinance no. 3 which deals with lay Salvatorians was given the title “The Salvatorian Family” to express clearly the chapter’s intention that any new development should be in conjunction with the sisters and the existing lay groups.”⁴⁰

Father Malachy, the Superior General, referring to lay Salvatorians, said in his opening speech: “We are at present attempting to do this through our lay associate program which, although it has a long way to go, is developing in some way as the Founder originally envisaged the Society’s co-operation with the laity.” He stated that the program should go ahead, that there was a lot to be learned from laity and that it should be recognized that they also share the priesthood of Christ.⁴¹

The chapter, which confirmed all the efforts made by the administrative units, approved “ordinance no. 3 on the Salvatorian Family” which asserts: that we are all brothers and sisters (male/female, religious/lay) in the Salvatorian Family; that the Holy Spirit is moving and working inside the Church throughout the world; that we have received the heritage of a Founder who wanted people from all states of life to work together that all may know the Savior; that the theology of the Second Vatican Council emphasizes the primacy of our baptismal commitment and the responsibility of all the baptized for ministry; that today’s world needs our witness of unity in diversity; that our personal experience tells us that from the laity we learn much that helps us grow in our religious life; and that the laity are asking for this relationship with the Salvatorians. On account of the aforesaid assertions, the chapter gave directives on relationships with the Salvatorian Sisters and with the members of the *Association of the Divine Savior*:

1. With the Congregation

Our generalate should discuss with the generalate of the Congregation concrete forms of strengthening the collaboration between the Society and the Congregation, especially in international commissions and in new missions. The superiors of the administrative units should work with the sisters for better collaboration.

2. With the Association of the Divine Savior

To create a joint commission sponsored, if possible, by both the Society and the Congregation in order to continue to encourage the Association of the Divine Savior; to create a national coordination program in those countries where the Association exists; to provide assistance to provinces which wish to start an Association; to study the feasibility of an international coordinating board of the Association when national coordinating boards are operating in more countries.

The chapter of 1993, remembering the resolution of the XIV General Chapter which took place in Steinfeld in 1987, asked for the work of this international commission and all international work with laity to take into account that there are three levels of work with laity on behalf of the Society, namely:

1. With all *laity* who collaborate in virtue of their baptismal commitment;
2. With the *collaborators* who are closer to us in the spirit and apostolic purpose of our Society;

⁴⁰ Ibid. pp. 6-7

⁴¹ Cf.. Annales Vol. XIV N. 1, 1993 p. 11

3. And with the *Lay Salvatorians* who through a commitment participate more fully in the life, spirit and apostolic purpose of the Society.

Once more, the difference existing between the collaborators in general (the baptized laity who help in the apostolate), the collaborators who are more closely involved (Salvatorian collaborators who help and share the spirit and the apostolic aims of the Society), and Lay Salvatorians was underlined.

The chapter also asked that in establishing new groups of Associates, cultural differences be recognized and observed. The International Commission on the Laity was asked to find and point out the common elements that exist in the different groups and to continue describing the Association of the Divine Savior.

The text finished with an exhortation to all members of the Society to pray and devote time and energy to bring about collaboration between all members of the Salvatorian Family.

And finally, the chapter asked the International Historical Commission to study in more detail the relationship between Father Jordan and the laity.⁴²

From 1994 to 1995

Two joint meetings of the generalates of the Society and the Congregation

On June 1, 1994, the members of the two generalates met at the Motherhouse on Via della Conciliazione and talked about the Commission on Charism, the sharing of material and publications, the centenary festivities of the purchase of the Motherhouse, the General Synod of the Society and the General Chapter of the Congregation to be celebrated in 1995. There was also talk of the beatification of Father Jordan, of the Archives, of the expansion of the Society and of Lay Salvatorians.

On this last point they decided to hold a meeting of the Joint Commission for Lay Salvatorians, not in 1996 as initially planned but in 1997 or 1998. This commission was to be composed of three sisters, three fathers and three lay and one representative for each generalate. They thought that the two generalates had to continue encouraging the administrative units to establish groups of lay, and that it was too early to start an International Coordination of Lay Salvatorians. It was discussed, though not approved, that a representative of each generalate should be charged with the international coordination program with the help of a lay person for communication purposes. They agreed that they had to be very conscious of the different expectations and qualities of the groups in the different countries as well of the language, the length of the journeys, the level of integration inside each province, etc. A decision was taken to carry out an inquiry in all the units about the development of Lay Salvatorians in the course of the last two years.

The second meeting took place in the head office of the sisters' generalate in Villa Maria (Rome) on January 10, 1995. Various issues of common interest were discussed regarding the commissions on history and charism, the promotion of Father Jordan's cause for beatification, the celebration of the two general chapters in the same year, cooperation in East Europe, and Lay Salvatorians. On this last point it was made known that 16 administrative units had sent their answers to the inquiry on the movement of Lay Salvatorians. There was also talk of the

⁴² Cf.. *Annales* Vol. XIV N. 1, 1993

importance of motivating all units to start new groups and of the conformation of the future joint International Commission of Lay Salvatorians. On the implementation of this last point, it was decided to wait until the meeting of the general chapter of the Congregation.

Eighth General Synod in Rome in 1995 and visits from Father Karl Hoffmann

Normally general synods evaluate the implementation of the resolutions made by the previous general chapter. The Eighth General Synod was celebrated in the Motherhouse in Rome (October 13-25, 1995). It took account of the fact that although the number of Lay Salvatorians was growing in many countries⁴³, in many administrative units dynamism was lacking in the implementation of recommendation N. 6, which asked provincials to reinforce the calling to the apostolate and more fully integrate our lay Salvatorians in our mission.”⁴⁴

Father Karl Hoffmann enthusiastically embraced his task of visiting, in the next six years, all the administrative units of the Society and made contact with lay Salvatorians, as we shall see later.

On January 21, 1995, he met in Bad Wurzach (**Southern Germany**) with some laity who expressed their wish to enter in closer contact with the Salvatorians. He acknowledged that in other parts of the province there were various “spiritual” groups of laity and asserted that “the personal contact many times would be the starting point for the formation for a group. But it is important that with time a Salvatorian silhouette is given”.⁴⁵

In **Austria** (March to April 1996) he pointed out that on the one hand, the group of lay Salvatorians needed more time, and on the other, the religious members should not impose their particular charism on the lay members.⁴⁶

The visit to **Brazil** was not realized by Father Karl but by Father Andres Urbański, the Vicar General, who participated in a meeting of the ISC (Inter-Salvatorian Cooperation) where seven projects were presented on History and Charism, Vocational Promotion, Formation, Salvatorian Spirituality, Evangelization, The Association of the Divine Savior and Salvatorian Events. A report was delivered and an evaluation was made of the work realized by the national coordination as well as by the Salvatorian Laity of two different regions. Commenting on the reports, Father Urbański said that lay Salvatorians needed to build up their identity, to improve their formation and to solve their financial difficulties.⁴⁷ At the end, he said that in Brazil great results were obtained with laity; they had their own autonomy, structure, government, and statutes. “As some members said, more consolidation and maturation of the present Salvatorian groups is needed and the possibility of starting new groups needs to be considered. However, the present engagement of members in various apostolates makes it difficult to assist new groups.”⁴⁸

When visiting **Poland** (in September and October, 1996), Father Karl wrote that the work with lay Salvatorians and with young people had to be further developed and “when these

⁴³ Annales Vol. XIV, N. 7, 1996, p. 454

⁴⁴ Annales Vol. XIV, N. 7, 1996, p. 456

⁴⁵ Annales Vol. XIV, N. 7, 1996, p. 461

⁴⁶ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 557

⁴⁷ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 569

⁴⁸ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, pp. 577 - 578

new apostolates are accepted by the province, confreres should be trained for them.”⁴⁹ I believe that in the last couple of years Father Hoffmann’s prophetic words are being realized.

When visiting the province of **North Germany** (January to February, 1997), Father Karl praised the religious members because their communities were involving lay people in their apostolic work and were encouraging them to share our Salvatorian charism and mission.⁵⁰

In **Switzerland** (February, 1997), he expressed his desire that some external students be invited to enter the movement of lay Salvatorians but that this could only be done if the confreres managed to get them interested in the spirit of the Society.⁵¹

In **Italy** (March, 1997) he only underlined that the religious members were carrying out missionary activities in different nations and that they were supported by many lay people from Tor de Cenci (Rome) and Lonato. Some time earlier twenty Lay Salvatorians had made their first “vows” (this is how he calls the commitment).⁵²

In the **United States** he participated in the General Assembly of the entire Salvatorian Family (June 25, 1997), where I presented a paper on the development of lay Salvatorians in the Society.⁵³ On the same day Father Karl said: “The Lay Salvatorian movement in your country has a long and good history. However, I observed differences from region to region; there are different expectations. We must work together internationally, along with the Salvatorian Sisters, to find a common way. I am convinced that when each branch of the Salvatorian Family is clear about its own identity, we will have a good future together as one family. Since we are forming one family, each branch needs to be supportive of vocations for the other branches as well as its own.”⁵⁴

In **Tanzania** (July to September, 1997) Father Karl also spoke prophetic words by asserting that there is a lot of potential to form groups of lay Salvatorians in Tanzania, and recommended them to appoint a member to coordinate the establishment of the lay Salvatorians and to carry out this task in close collaboration with the Salvatorian sisters.⁵⁵

In **Congo** (September, 1997) he affirmed that the first steps had already been made to involve the laity in Salvatorian charism and ministry and that a group of people interested in becoming lay Salvatorians had been established in Kolwezi in 1996.⁵⁶ Ten years later, on December 9, 2007, a group of 25 lay Salvatorians would make their first commitment for one year!

In **Belgium** (March, 1998) he participated in the Day of the Salvatorian Family which gathered approximately 250 people.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 584

⁵⁰ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 594

⁵¹ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 600

⁵² Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 602

⁵³ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 607

⁵⁴ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 607

⁵⁵ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 616

⁵⁶ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 620

⁵⁷ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 637

When he visited **England** (May to June 9, 1998) he noted that, while there did not yet exist a program for associates, there was interest since Father Bernard Finan has participated in the meeting of associates, sisters, and fathers/brothers in São Paulo, Brazil.⁵⁸

First meeting of the Joint Commission on Lay Salvatorians in 1996

Let us remember that in 1993 the Fifteenth General Chapter of the Society had asked in its resolution no. 3 that a joint commission be created with the Sisters to encourage Lay Salvatorians. In 1995 the General Chapter of the Congregation supported this resolution of the Society and on November 14, 1996, three delegates of the two generalates (two sisters and a father) proposed that a “preparatory committee” be formed, composed of the following members: for the laity: Ermes Luparia (It.), Mauricio Rodriguez (CO.), Frank Tomsik (USA), Inacio Maycot (Br.) and Auzilio Nani (Br.); for the Congregation Hildegard Enzenhofer and Grace Mary Croft (on behalf of the Generalate of the Congregation) plus Rosilde Binotto (Br.); and for the Society Rupert Aschenbrenner (on behalf of the Generalate of the Society), Deolino Baldissera (Br.), and Ignacio Madera (CO.).

The meeting took place in Brazil from October 6 to 10, 1997, and the following statistics were presented:

Engaged Lay Salvatorians

Austria: 3 groups of lay Salvatorians, 15 members (10 with commitment);

Brazil: 29 groups, 340 members (117 with commitment);

Colombia: 11 groups, 140 members (117 with commitment);

Italy: 3 groups, 60 members (20 with commitment);

USA: 6 regions, 99 members with commitment

Lay Salvatorians who have not taken formal commitment:

Belgium, England, Congo, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan and Tanzania

The participants of the meeting discussed the following topics: the supporting of units in order to start groups of Lay Salvatorians; the contents of the formation program; the constitution of the national coordination programs; the economic autonomy of the lay Salvatorians, and the necessity to know more about the different canonical and juridical forms of association. Father Ignacio Madera, a university professor, was charged with examining some possibilities, particularly in canon law, and others promised to contact the Congregation for Religious as well as other Institutes with lay associates.

Father Rupert Aschenbrenner sent a report about this meeting to the Ninth General Synod in 1997.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 8, 1998, p. 639

⁵⁹ This document (no. 30), dated October 23, 1997, can be found in the Archives of the Society [Lay Salvatorians. This material is not yet classified.]

The Ninth General Synod of 1997 in Brazil

This synod, which was especially concerned with renewal, said that it was necessary to create methods to raise religious consciousness among people through Christian formation and spiritual development. For this reason, it was necessary to collaborate with the entire Salvatorian family, to share with the laity, to promote ecumenical initiatives, and to join forces in ministries that promote the defense of life and human rights. All this would require the preparation of lay people and Christian communities so that they could assume their leadership in the work of evangelization.⁶⁰

The General Synod also approved resolution no. 9 concerning lay Salvatorians, which encouraged all units to promote the lay Salvatorian vocation and urged that this promotion be made in collaboration with the Salvatorian sisters, wherever feasible; it also urged that those units which did not have committed lay Salvatorians should promote vocations to the lay. It also asked that the work of the preparatory committee on the Joint International Commission on Lay Salvatorians should be maintained and that all work that had been done so far should be continued; it endorsed the further study of canonical and juridical forms of association consistent with the ideas of Father Jordan. It asked the generalate to invite one lay person from each unit where there were Lay Salvatorians to participate in the 1999 General Chapter as *periti*. Each unit would cover its own travel costs. Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Italy, and the United States were mentioned.

The Ninth General Synod also proposed that the next general chapter should create, with the agreement of the Congregation, a collaborative commission to prepare more uniform articles on the Salvatorian Family and lay Salvatorians for their respective constitutions and general directories (art. 107, 108 and 1.6); it also encouraged lay Salvatorians to participate in the work of this joint commission once they had managed to establish an international structure; it recommended that the development of structures for the Salvatorian Family as well as for lay Salvatorians on both the unit and international levels should grow hand in hand, so that unity, clarity, and identity would be promoted. Lastly, it invited the members of the generalate of the Congregation to participate as *periti* in the 1999 General Chapter, especially (though not exclusively) when common themes would be discussed.⁶¹

The Sixteenth General Chapter of 1999 and Laity

This general chapter, celebrated in Graz, Austria, determined that the International Commission should continue its work and asked the Superior General of the Society to contact the Superior General of the Congregation so as to establish an International Joint Commission on Charism, which was accomplished a few years later. In its recommendation no. 7, it asked that the Salvatorian Family should work on three objectives, two of them aiming at the whole of the Salvatorian Family and the other at the Society. Concrete details were given to reach these objectives:

1. All members of the Salvatorian Family should further clarify their understanding of their identity as a Salvatorian. One way of doing so is to write a joint international document for the Salvatorian Family... containing “those elements of our Salvatorian charism, spirituality, community and mission which we all share in common, whether we are Fathers, Brothers,

⁶⁰ Annales, Vol. XIV, N. 9, 1999, p. 580

⁶¹ Annales, Vol. IX, 1999, p. 583

Sisters or Lay Salvatorians.” This document should also “include any procedures which all parts of the Salvatorian Family deem appropriate and necessary to promote better collaboration and cooperation among the branches of the Salvatorian family”.

2. The Society should intensify its collaboration with the Salvatorian sisters on two levels: first, between the two generalates, through joint works on new foundations, vocation recruitment, initial and continuing formation, and beatification; second, between the superiors of the administrative units.

3. The Salvatorian Family should deepen its understanding of the *Association of the Divine Savior* and promote the lay Salvatorian vocation. This should be achieved by continuing the work of the international commission on lay Salvatorians, creating national coordinating groups for lay Salvatorians, writing a Constitution for the *Association of the Divine Savior*, creating an international committee to coordinate the Association of the Divine Savior, all the while keeping in mind the documents of other synods, general chapters and congregational councils on cooperation with the laity.⁶²

International Meeting of Lay Salvatorians in 2003

The General Chapter in Graz nominated a new general leadership and I was elected General Consultor. Father Andrew Urbański assigned various responsibilities to me; one of them was to encourage lay Salvatorians worldwide on behalf of the Society. Sister Edith Bramberger was put in charge of pursuing this same goal on behalf of the sisters. With the help of Sister Isabel Tooda, General Secretary of the Congregation, and supported and encouraged by both generalates, we summoned the national coordinators of lay Salvatorians to a meeting to be held in Rome in November, 2003, and we sent them an agenda proposal which included the following topics:

1. Who are we? (history of our vocation as Lay Salvatorians; concerns and hopes for the meeting; How many are we and what do we do in our respective units?).
2. What is our calling? Our dreams? What would Father Jordan ask from us in this meeting? Which of our dreams can we realize? Elaboration of minimal norms for Lay Salvatorians at the international level.
3. How could we realize our dreams at the international level? [First part]: How could we establish a unit and an international structure for lay Salvatorians? How could we create an international web of communication among Lay Salvatorians in the world?
4. How could we realize our dreams at the international level? [Second part]: Report on the process of the Declaration on the Salvatorian Family (Charter); How to work on the ‘Charter’ and how to write some “Rules or Constitutions for lay Salvatorians at the international level.” Preparation of a report on the meeting, to be presented to both generalates.
5. First historical meeting of prayer and work among the international leaders of the three branches of the Salvatorian Family to share the results of the meeting of lay Salvatorians and to discuss common themes of the whole Salvatorian Family.

⁶² Annales Vol XV 1999 N. 1 pp. 28-31 of the Spanish version.

The results of that meeting were very fruitful because for the first time an international organization of lay Salvatorians was created and the first international minimal norms were approved for entrance of new members, a process of initial and continuing formation, commitment, and finances.

In addition two organisms were set up: the Lay Salvatorian International Board (LSIB), composed of the 7 coordinators of the respective units represented at the meeting; and the Lay Salvatorian International Committee (LSIC) composed of a president, a secretary, and a treasurer. The above-mentioned tasks had a duration of three years, i.e. until 2006, when not only the First International Assembly of the Lay Salvatorians but also the general chapters of the Society and the Congregation would be held.

However, not everything was rose-colored since despite the competence and the good will of the members of the Board and the Committee, there were many difficulties in establishing the communication web through the internet and to implement their plans on formation, drafting of statutes, and participation of all lay Salvatorians of the world in the correction of the ‘Charter.’

2006

Seventeenth General Chapter

The Seventeenth General Chapter of the Society took place in Logroño (Spain) and had the following topic: “Together for life, Revitalizing our Identity as Salvatorians in the World Today.” I participated as a member of the Generalate. The generalate of the sisters and some Lay Salvatorians were invited. The atmosphere was very pleasant, without tensions, and this facilitated the discussions and the decisions. Here I only sum up what was said about the Salvatorian Family and laity⁶³:

1. Regarding the expansion of the Society, a criterion was established to cooperate, when possible, with the Salvatorian Sisters and/or Lay Salvatorians.
2. The International Historical Commission was asked to continue to cooperate with the Salvatorian Sisters and Lay Salvatorians in light of our common heritage.
3. The International Commission for Continuing Formation was told that it could invite to its meetings, as periti, a Salvatorian Sister and a Lay Salvatorian and that one of its most important priorities consisted in developing effective ways of ministering to and with laity.
4. Concerning the veneration of Father Jordan, the units were asked to invite the Salvatorian Sisters and the Lay Salvatorians to collaborate in promoting the veneration of our Founder.
5. It was decided to continue the work of the International Joint Commission on Charism, with the same number of members for each branch, and it was charged with giving more depth to our Salvatorian identity and with helping the Salvatorian Family in the application of the Charter in its communities and apostolates, respecting the culture of each unit. The generalate was given the task of contacting the sisters and the lay to open a dialogue on the concrete way of implementing this decision.

⁶³ Cfr. The resolutions of the General Chapter in the *Annales* Vol. XVI 2006 N.1

6. The general chapter placed stronger emphasis on the Salvatorian Family Charter and took the following decisions:

- to approve the text of the Charter together with the sisters and lay, through their respective international leaderships;
- to ask all Salvatorians (religious and lay) to continue their common reflection on the elements of the Charter in the coming six years;
- to ask the leaders of the three branches in the various units to work together for the development of a process of continuing formation in order to provoke reflection on the Charter;
- to ask the three branches to hold their meetings simultaneously in 2012. (chapters of the Congregation and of the Society and the Lay Salvatorian International Assembly);
- to continue and intensify the regular contact and meetings between the leaders of the three branches at both the unit and international levels;
- to call upon all Salvatorians to promote vocations for the three branches of the Salvatorian Family;
- the Units where there are no Lay Salvatorians must appoint a person to promote, if possible in cooperation with the sisters, the Lay Salvatorian vocation;
- the Society should support and assist the Lay Salvatorians in efforts to clarify their juridical status in the Church.

This General Chapter recognized explicitly that, at both the international and the unit levels significant progress had been made in our common awareness as Salvatorian Family. This is absolutely certain. I believe that there is much clarity at the level of official documents on this topic. The only thing that we need to do is to dedicate our forces to the implementation of all these decisions!

The First International Assembly of Lay Salvatorians in 2006

The assembly took place in Rome at the sanctuary of “Divino Amore” from October 30 until November 3, 2006. I participated on behalf of the Generalate of the Society, worked as a translator and was invited to do the homily at the Opening Mass. I believe that my words were prophetic because the Assembly approved strategies to implement the points that I mentioned:

“This international meeting is called to make some first steps to:

1. reestablish an Association of Salvatorian children.
2. seek forms by which all Salvatorians of the world might share the Salvatorian spirit and identity with hundreds of groups of youth throughout the world.

3. start a process to unite educated Catholic scientists so that they commit themselves to a dialog between faith and reason, making the wise of this world know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.
4. recreate, together with the other branches of our Family, a world wide organization of benefactors, with the goal of elaborating common projects that need great economic resources”.

This Assembly, in which delegates from 11 administrative units participated, elected the International Committee, composed of Judy Davis from the United States (international coordinator), Sabin Ormaza from Venezuela (general secretary), Ermes Luparia from Italy (general treasurer), Idovino Baldissera from Brazil and Christian Patzl from Austria.

It also revised and organized a system of communication via internet, established financial norms and created the following commissions:

1. Constitutions and Statutes.
2. History.
3. The Charter.
4. Youth.
5. Collaborators and Benefactors.

The Assembly decided to change the name of “Lay Salvatorians” to something that would allow the inclusion of deacons and priests willing to work under the inspiration of the charism of Father Jordan. Through internet communication over several months, the members of the third branch of the Salvatorian Family chose the name “International Community of the Divine Savior.”

This first Assembly, which received a visit from both generalates, was a small but essential step towards the maturity of the third branch at the international level.

The international committee decided to participate in two joint meetings with the two generalates over the next six years. The first meeting, which was held on October 4, 2007, was very interesting and intense and allowed the exchange of experiences for the benefit of the Salvatorian Family and its growth.

At the end of 2007, there were lay Salvatorians, (candidates or in a formation process or with commitment) in all continents and in almost all the countries where the members of the Society and the Congregation work (Germany, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Congo, the Czech Republic, Spain, the United States of America, the Philippines, India, England, Italy, Poland, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Venezuela, etc.)

Conclusions

After having presented the evolution of the third branch of the Salvatorian Family, I would like to offer some conclusions. I trust God will guide this entire process, relying on the collaboration of all of us Salvatorians throughout the whole world.

1. I believe that the study of Salvatorian sources has greatly helped us to understand the importance of laity in Jordan’s original plan.

2. The first steps of the process were not easy because the proposal of the United States was risky: first, because the founding charism was not well known; then there was the fear that the laity would invade the world of the religious members; and finally, because the only experience of work with laity had been as collaborators and/or benefactors of both sexes, but not as people called to form an equal and complementary branch of the Society and the Congregation.

3. The joint work carried out by the Society and the Congregation through synods, councils, assemblies and general chapters on the topic of laity as well as their inclusion in the general directories of the Congregation and the Society were decisive for the consolidation of the third branch. This article, in which the Salvatorian family is described, accepts lay Salvatorians as an integral part of the life and mission of the Salvatorian family:

“The Society of the Divine Savior, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior and the Lay Salvatorians form the Salvatorian Family. All are inspired by the same charism and sent for the same mission. Faithful to Father Jordan’s vision, the Society strives to fulfill its mission by collaborating with the Congregation and the Lay Salvatorians. The Society also promotes Salvatorian ideals among others and encourages them to undertake apostolic commitments to build up the Christian spirit in their environment”.⁶⁴

4. Although the Society and the Congregation encouraged lay Salvatorians at the national and the international levels and worked with them for many years, the decisive step to leave in their hands the development of its first international structure was only taken in 2003; and only in 2006 did they realize their first international assembly. This means that the third branch of the Salvatorian Family is still very young and needs, therefore, to be supported and accompanied by religious Salvatorians.

5. Changing the name of Lay Salvatorians to International Community of the Divine Savior coincided with the approval of the Declaration of the Salvatorian Family (Charter) by the three international leadership councils, i.e. the two generalates and international committee of the third branch. This Charter can be considered the Salvatorian DNA and it motivates us to think, to form ourselves, to work, and to live as a true family.

6. I believe that the two weakest points of the International Community of the Divine Savior are the problems concerning the initial and permanent formation of its members and the lack of minimal norms of legal force at the international level. The religious Salvatorians have a clear understanding of how to recognize a vocation, how to accompany it in its formative period, what its identity is or should be, what one should ask of it in its apostolate, etc. The lay, however, do not have a sufficient understanding of these matters. Today, for example, there are many distinct groups which have followed very different formative processes and which, therefore, need to have a clearer understanding of their identity as Salvatorians. This identity can only be ascertained if at the international level a basic and solid formation, both initial and continuing, is provided for everybody; this formation should obviously respect different cultures and would need to be deepened and strengthened as time goes by. Those currently responsible for the International Community of the Divine Savior are aware that they have the delicate task to write the first international statutes, to discover concrete ways to transmit these Statutes to all groups, to revise the formation which has been provided so far,

⁶⁴ General Directory of the Society, art. 1.6

and to continually deepen and widen the formation process for its members. This is a difficult but essential task.

7. The birth, development, and growth of the lay movement, born out of Jordan's charism, have been a manifestation of the power of the Spirit which has enabled it to overcome difficult moments and to have a wide horizon. Today, there are more than one thousand people who follow this path, despite the fact that only a small proportion of religious Salvatorians are actively involved in the lay movement's promotion, formation and support.

8. This entire history, full of achievements, presents all members of the Salvatorian family with a number of challenges such as to know better our Salvatorian history; to learn how to think, live and act as members of one family; to respect each person's identity; and to promote vocations to all three branches. I am sure that we are getting closer to the official recognition of lay Salvatorians by the Church. Then will come the official recognition of the three branches, i.e. of the Salvatorian Family, and the beautiful idea that Jordan proposed to the Church more than 125 years ago will come true.

Fr. Mario Agudelo Roldán SDS
Rome, December 27, 2007
Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

